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NEWS BRIEFS

Khaleda, Hasina greet Mahathir

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has felicitated Dr Mahathir bin Mohammad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, on the occasion of the Malaysian National Day. Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina also greeted the Malaysian Prime Minister on the occasion.

Help for Chinese flood victims

Bangladesh has donated one lakh US dollar to help the recent flood victims of China. Bangladesh Ambassador to China Mustafizur Rahman on Monday handed over a cheque of the amount to Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, reports UNB.

Dan Quayle's denial

WASHINGTON, Aug 30: Former Vice President Dan Quayle today denied media reports he had decided to run for president in 1996 but said he was "thinking about it." The reports said Quayle decided to run after encouraging sales of his book "Standing Firm," reports Reuters.

Many trapped as bldg collapses in Seoul

SEOUL, Aug 30: An unknown number of people were feared trapped when a four-storey commercial building collapsed in northern Seoul this morning television reports said, reports AFP.

Ciller cancels Cairo visit

ANKARA, Aug 30: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller has cancelled a planned visit to Cairo on September 5 to attend the UN population conference, an official statement said today. It said she would be too busy preparing for the opening of parliament in early September, reports Reuters.

The population conference has come under fire from Muslim activists, who say its position on birth control contravenes Islamic values. The Vatican has also denounced the forum.

On agenda for possible Govt- Opposition dialogue

Opposing camps issue conflicting statements

By Staff Correspondent

Ruling party and Opposition leaders continued to make contradictory statements regarding the possible agenda for any dialogue between them to end the current political stalemate.

Briefing newsmen at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban after the opening session of Parliament yesterday, marked once again by empty Opposition benches, Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury said he had sent specific proposals to the rival camp expressing his party's willingness to discuss on any agenda to end the impasse.

On the other hand, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim told newsmen at another briefing that no

concrete agenda had been received from the government side yet.

"We are ready to hold discussions on any agenda, including the caretaker government issue," Prof Chowdhury said after a meeting of the BNP parliamentary party last night.

"If they think my proposal is incomplete, I am once again sending it through you," he told the reporters.

Prof Chowdhury said he had conveyed the proposal to his counterpart Abdus Samad Azad but was yet to get any reply.

"He (Samad Azad) said he would give me a reply after consultation with his party chief and other Opposition leaders," Prof Chowdhury said. Prof Chowdhury said that he

had also informed his party colleagues about the progress so far towards a dialogue at last night's BNP PP meeting.

Meeting sources said the party MPs and ministers discussed the political and economic situation, the drought in northern part of the country and the food stock.

Party chief and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia chaired the two-hour meeting.

Prof Chowdhury said the treasury bench would hold discussions with all the opposition parties in a bid to make them return to the Jatiya Sangsad. The BNP, he said, had already made contacts with the Jamaat-e-Islami over telephone and would make

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Opposition MPs stay away as JS goes into its 16th session

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS), on the first day of its 16th session yesterday, enacted a legislation — the Government and Autonomous Bodies Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance Ordinance (Amendment) Bill, 1994.

The Opposition parties in Parliament, who have been boycotting the JS proceedings to press home their demand for a constitutional provision for holding general elections under a caretaker government, were once again absent from the House.

With the passage of the bill, employees of the government and autonomous bodies, if retired because of physical or mental disability, would be entitled to allowances from the benevolent funds of the institutions concerned.

Piloting the bill, State Minister for Establishment Aminul Haq said under the ex-

isting laws the employees of government and autonomous bodies were not entitled to regular monthly allowances from the benevolent fund if they retired on health and mental grounds despite having made regular contributions to the fund during their service life.

He said until now employees used to get allowances from the benevolent fund only when they were declared disabled on health and mental grounds and removed from service.

Yesterday's two-hour long session of Parliament also witnessed the introduction of a fresh Companies Bill, 1994 which according to the Commerce Minister, would replace the Companies Act of 1913.

Explaining the objectives of the bill, Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam said, the pro-

posed law would be a timely legal measure to meet the present-day requirements of the companies.

The bill, if adopted by the House, would also ensure accountability in the management of the companies and bring about a degree of discipline in their administration," the minister added.

Earlier, obituary references were made in the House on Awami League (AL) member of the present Parliament Rawshan Ali and former members M U Muttalib, M A Awal, Syed Kamrul Islam Mohammad Saleh Uddin and a former Provincial Assembly member Khoda Bux Choudhury.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali moved the obituary reference, while Deputy Leader of the House Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah and Shahidul Ha-

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Rice, wheat under OMS

The Government has decided to sell rice and wheat under the Open Market Sale (OMS) from tomorrow following a bit of spiral in the price of foodgrains in some areas of the country, reports UNB.

This was informed at a meeting of the food planning and monitoring committee held at the conference room of the Ministry of Food yesterday.

The meeting also viewed that overall food situation of the country is at present normal and satisfactory as there is adequate stock of foodgrains in the government godowns.

Presided over by the Chairman of the committee and Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, the meeting was attended by its members — Agriculture and Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majid-ul Haque and State Minister for Relief and Disaster Management Harun-al Rashid.

Food Secretary Islam Uddin

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SSC exams results of three boards Friday

The results of the 1994 Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations of the Comilla, Rajshahi and Jessore education boards will be simultaneously announced on September 2 at 10 am, according to an official handout in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Quoting a press release of the Education Ministry, the handout said the headmasters have been requested to collect the results of their respective schools from the secretaries of the centres concerned.

The examinees will be able to know the results from their respective examination centres or schools. No results would be hung in the board offices, the handout added.

Another handout says, the tabulation sheets of the SSC examinations held in 1994 of the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka could not still be distributed due to unavoidable reasons.



The outgoing Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Muhammad Noor Uddin Khan made a farewell call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday. — PID photo

US-led nations ask India to halt N-programme

NEW DELHI, Aug 30: US-led nations seeking to stop the flow of missiles technology to nuclear threshold countries urged India today to halt its alleged atomic weapons programme, diplomats said, reports Reuters.

They said senior officials from the United States, Britain, Switzerland and Australia told Indian officials that New Delhi's alleged weapons programme had helped raise regional tensions.

It was not immediately clear whether the officials were going to Pakistan, India's old enemy, to deliver the same message. Former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif has declared it already possesses the bomb.

The diplomats said the officials were talking to India to seek New Delhi's support for the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which tries to prevent atomic-weapons proliferation.

"AN MTCR team is meeting

with officials here to speak to India to gain its adherence to anti-proliferation guidelines," a Western diplomat told Reuters.

There was no immediate comment from Indian officials. India, which exploded an atomic device in 1974, denies it has a nuclear weapons programme but says it is developing its own medium-range and short-range missiles for possible conventional warfare.

India's tensions with Pakistan have escalated over their rival claims to the disputed Himalayan Kashmir region.

Washington says it believes both India and Pakistan could quickly assemble a nuclear bomb. The Islamabad government denied the declaration by Sharif, who said he made it to prevent any possibility of Pakistan dealing away its weapons programme.

US officials predicted earlier this year that South Asia was the most likely region for

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Gen Noor Uddin pays farewell calls on President, PM

Outgoing Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Noor Uddin Khan made farewell calls on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday, reports BSS.

At Bangabhaban General Noor Uddin stayed with the President for sometime.

The President, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, appreciated the services rendered by the retiring General.

During his farewell call on the Prime Minister, Begum Zia praised the Gen Noor Uddin for discharging his duties with devotion and competence.

General Noor Uddin expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister for giving him necessary support and guidance while performing duties as the Chief of Army Staff.

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Gunfire again rocks DU campus

By DU Correspondent

Sporadic gunfire again rocked the Dhaka University yesterday afternoon, hardly two weeks after a so-called 'peace accord' with the leading students' bodies pledging to rid the campus of violence.

About a hundred rounds of gunshots were exchanged in and around the Arts Faculty building as the pro-Awami League Chhatra League (M-I) and the JSD-backed Chhatra League (B-K) fought an hour-long battle beginning at 1:30 pm.

Campus insiders said the clash occurred following an incident Monday evening in which some BCL (M-I) activists reportedly assaulted four activists of the BCL(B-K) near the TSC.

No one was, however, injured in yesterday's violence.

Police lobbed at least 20 rounds of teargas shells near the Madhu's canteen, Lecture Theatre, the IBA and Arts

Faculty to bring the situation under control.

According to witnesses, the trouble began when some unidentified gunmen shot at two BCL (M-I) leaders Shahadat Hossain and Kamrul Islam near the Lecture Theatre gate of the Arts building at about 1:30 pm.

The gunmen missed their targets. The two BCL (M-I) leaders were on their way to the examination hall, sources said.

At about 1:45 pm the BCL (B-K) activists reportedly started shooting from near the Lecture Theatre and IBA building.

Witnesses added that at one stage the agitated BCL (B-K) activists entered the Madhu's canteen in search of their rival BCL(M-I) activists.

Some BCL(M-I) activists, coming from the library and DUCSU building areas, chased

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Ganatantri Party splits formally

By Staff Correspondent

The splitting process of the Ganatantri Party (GP) was finalised yesterday with Suranjit Sengupta, MP, constituting a new committee of the organisation at his residence yesterday.

Sengupta has been appointed convener of the 51-member committee, a press release issued by the faction said.

Earlier, leaders of the faction held a meeting with a presidium member of the undivided party Nurul Islam in the chair.

The meeting resolved that all the political forces committed to upholding the spirit of the Liberation War should now work under a common platform to fight against undemocratic fundamentalist forces.

Accusing the leaders of the undivided party of taking no effective initiatives for uniting the pro-liberation forces, the resolution said, the newly-emerged faction would make effective efforts to forge "broader unity" among the pro-liberation forces.

The Sengupta-led faction of the GP yesterday referred to a

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Rabitat Secy-Gen arrives

Secretary General of Rabitat Al Alam Al Islami Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Ali arrived in Dhaka last night on a brief visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He was received at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) by Chairman of the Advisory Board of Rabitat Al Alam Al-Islami, Bangladesh, Mujibur Rahman and the Mekkah-based worldwide organisation's director for Bangladesh Mir Quasem Ali and other leading officials of the organization.

During his stay in Dhaka, Dr. Ali will exchange views with Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman and Religious Affairs Minister Karamat Ali on the UN conference on population and development due to begin in Cairo on September 5.

Prior to his departure, he will brief newsmen on the Rabitat stand on the UN conference at the ZIA at 10 am today.

'Infrastructural weaknesses, not labour impeding foreign capital'

By Staff Correspondent

The real hurdle for foreign investment in Bangladesh is not labour or political unrest, but lack of infrastructural support, says the president of the American-Bangladesh Economic Forum (ABEF).

"Labour problem is a myth! The most serious problems faced by the investors here are lack of infrastructure facility and regular electricity supply," said Forrest Cookson yesterday.

"And this electricity supply situation is getting worse day by day," he told a group of economic reporters at the USIS premises in the city.

Cookson, who is also an advisor of the World Bank-funded financial sector reform programme, said that the fiscal reforms were not progressing due to a huge amount of non-performing loans.

"The banks cannot do much to recover the loans because of a weak legal system,"

Noting that Bangladesh has

the world's highest interest rates in history Cookson, who is a macro-economist working at the Bangladesh Bank, said that this discouraged investment because borrowers were compelled to take bigger risks.

There is a bright prospect for foreign investment in the energy sector of the country. A lot of US, Canadian and British firms have shown interest to explore for gas and oil," Cookson said. "But there is a lack of necessary government action in this regard."

One economic model which could help Bangladesh have quicker growth was to integrate the economy with India in terms of investment and trading.

"But of course, Bangladesh should maintain its own interest," Cookson cautioned and added: "The relationship between Bangladesh and India should be like that of the European Community countries where everybody

He observed that for Bangladesh investors, India's consumer market was vast. Moreover, investors of both the countries could adapt to the peculiar business climate more efficiently than other foreigners due to cultural proximity.

Critiquing the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Cookson said, "The IMF prescribes more taxes, but the economy of Bangladesh is not growing fast enough. Things are not moving. If you increase taxes now, the economy gets slow. This is an economic nonsense."

On attracting foreign investment, the macro-economist who has been working in Bangladesh for over eight years now noted, "People (foreign investors) want profit, as well as a good life. Bangladesh should accommodate their cultural diversities. Many of them do not feel wel-

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Series of blasts during JP procession in city

By Staff Correspondent

A series of cracker blasts after a Jatiya Party rally yesterday created panic among the pedestrians and shopkeepers in the Purana Paltan, Tophkhana Road and the Jatiya press club areas in the city.

The JP activists, who were hoodlums, set off cracker blasts while some witnesses were fleeing.

Hundreds of people ran for shelter when a group of unruly youngsters exploded the crackers on the road between Purana Paltan and the High Court during the post-rally procession.

Police restrain followed the processionists to the Ramna Park square where it dispersed.

Before dispersing Moudud Ahmed alleged that a government-sponsored group had attacked the post-rally procession.

Earlier, at the rally near the Shapla Chhatra, Moudud Ahmed said as the government

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Cairo conference to go ahead, says UN

UNITED NATIONS, Aug 30: A UN World Population Conference scheduled to begin next week in Cairo will take place as planned despite threats from Muslim extremists and security problems, a UN spokesman said Monday, reports AFP.

"We have every confidence in the host government to handle the security matters and there are no plans for any change in the conference which will take place as scheduled in Cairo, said Joe Sills, spokesman for UN General Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Sills said the United Nations would provide security services in the buildings housing the conference which will be held from September 5 to 13.

The Egyptian government was to be responsible for security in the city and in the area surrounding the conference buildings.

Muslims have reacted strongly to the conference's

agenda which proposes discussion on birth control and abortion, and Saudi Arabia has called for a boycott of the meeting by Muslim countries.

Reuters adds: Saudi Arabia will not take part in next week's UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, a UN spokesman said today.

CAIRO, Aug 30: A Cairo court today rejected an attempt by Muslim fundamentalists to stop the UN world population conference from going ahead. In a short hearing the court said it was not empowered to deal with the case because it concerned 'state sovereignty,' reports AFP.

The Saudi government told the United Nations of its decision at the end of last week, spokesman Ayman Al-Amir said.

The Saudis had not previously said they would attend and they gave no reason for their decision to stay away, he added.